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## EDITORIAL

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To capitalize to the utmost the upward strivings of the nation which have been stimulated by the idealism of the war is clearly the chief opportunity of education at the present time. The speech movement is one of the major opportunities for doing this. The amount of illiteracy and of ineffective and slovenly speech discovered by the army tests has served to awaken everybody to our language deficiencies. Even the man in the street is conscious now that thousands in our midst are untouched by our American spirit because they cannot communicate with us; and that thousands, yes, tens of thousands, more are unable to play their full part as citizens and workers in the industrial democracy because they cannot talk. The country is ready to do something about the question of our speech.

**The Speech Campaign**

Readers of this journal know that plans for doing something are on foot. The movement for a nation-wide celebration of American Speech Week, which was launched at the Chicago meeting of the Council in February, has met with instant favor everywhere. Several state and city associations already have active committees, and plans in many schools and clubs are already far advanced. The *Guide* for the celebration, prepared by Miss Crumpton, secretary of the Speech Committee, is in process of distribution.

No school or club, however remote from the big centers, need hesitate to join in the celebration. The methods already employed and found successful are described in the *Guide*, and the files of the *English Journal* will supply much additional concrete detail. There is, moreover, plenty of room for individual initiative. Bearing in mind that the celebration is primarily intended to develop a strong public sentiment for a common speech that is at once clear, pleasant, and forceful, let each group undertake to carry out the project largely in its own way. Sentiment will grow best

in the soil of whole-hearted, purposeful activity. Each should participate, as his abilities permit, in planning and carrying through the exercises of the week. Slogans, posters, plays, contests, speeches, inventories, songs, and the rest should be mainly the work of the pupils of each school, the members of each club. A ready-made celebration is precisely the thing the national committee is seeking to avoid. Make each local celebration, says the committee, a project.

Two other suggestions of the committee are worthy of special notice. One of these relates to standards. Purism and pedantry will prove fatal. Let no over-zealous advocate of correctness attempt to force on his community his own predilections. Divided usage is very common among us, as the dictionary eloquently testifies. Niceties, moreover, must wait till decencies have had their day. The other suggestion is that definite plans for the "follow-up" be laid along with plans for the celebration itself. Sentiment is easily dissipated. It needs to be transformed into habit. This will provide a major task for many months to come.

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#### AN ITEM FOR EXPLANATION

The interpretation of the results of a survey dealing with accumulations of data of varying reliability and comprehensiveness cannot be made a purely mathematical process: it is dependent upon an intimate knowledge of the sources from which they come and the conditions which they reflect, and is often peculiarly difficult. A special illustration offers itself in the fact that one item of the forthcoming report of the Committee on the cost and labor of English teaching, dealing with the comparative labor, measured in time units, of the principal subjects taught in the non-departmental grades of elementary schools, seems to show beyond question that in all but the lowest grades English is always at a disadvantage; that it carries an average overload of perhaps twenty-five per cent. That is, if each subject were taught by an independent teacher devoting all her time to it, the English teacher would be required to work several hours a week more than any other teacher. This item, coupled with the corresponding item

that English is also overloaded with pupils and at the same time underpaid in comparison with other subjects, presumably explains in part why the results of English teaching grow more and more unsatisfactory in passing from the lower to the higher grades, where the overload is greatest.

But it is not so easy to understand why the time disproportion should exist in non-departmental work where the adjustment is intended to be perfectly fair and even. It seems to indicate that English recitations should be a trifle longer than they are, and others shortened a trifle in proportion: a thing presumably impracticable unless the length of the school period should be slightly modified. Whatever the reason may be, after all the important matter is not that English has this comparative overload, since the removal of this discrepancy between English and other subjects could do little to make the results of English teaching more satisfactory; it is the fact that for proper efficiency the load of English must be determined by conditions independent of those of other subjects. In the non-departmental grades, as well as in departmental grades, high schools, and colleges, it needs a very great reduction, necessitating a corresponding increase in the teaching force, to be determined relative to the number of pupils in all cases, and to the conditions of those pupils, as for instance whether they are of American or foreign parentage. The thing that chiefly needs explaining is not why the handicap of English is a little more or less, but why so enormous a burden should be imposed upon it as to make its task in all schools under merely normal conditions absolutely hopeless; why the recitation schedule of many an English teacher is a thing to strike terror to the soul of a galley slave, if only he knew the meaning of it.

E. M. H.